ROYAL LEPAGE®
West Real Estate Services

MOVING ABROAD TIMELINE

You are getting set to embark upon a new phase of life in a different country. There are a few additional things to include in your moving preparations. Here is a timeline that I hope will help you get settled into your new country. Assess your own busy schedule, and modify the indicated leeway in terms of months and weeks to ensure that your move is smooth and hassle-free.

First, documentation will play a premiere role in your next few months; yes, months. Leave yourself ample time, if possible, to get yourself and your family ready for this endeavor. Little tasks become more beaurocratic, and can take more time. For instance, each box, crate and cargo container will need to be accompanied by an official declaration of the contents, serial numbers, and how long you have owned certain items. Specific forms will be used to record these items for Customs authorities,

Second, be prepared for additional expenses. Depending on the possessions that you decide to take with you, departing Canada might introduce you to the federal government's disposition tax, or Deemed Disposition. Entering certain countries may include import taxes for possessions not considered household, or personal, items. Importing vehicles (air, sea or land) often necessitates mechanical alteration in order to be compliant with your new destination's regulations.

There are significant benefits to planning wisely in terms of reducing stress and fatigue, when it comes to moving abroad. I hope this will help you get settled into your new country.

3 MONTHS BEFORE YOUR MOVE

Inventory and Initial Decisions:

- ○ **Perform a full inventory. Room by room, list furniture, electronics, appliances, artwork, and valuables. Record serial numbers and take photos of high-value items. Locate receipts or bank records indicating when higher value purchases were made, where possible.**

- ○ **Decide what to take, store, donate, or sell. High-value items you rarely use can be sold and replaced abroad if cheaper after taxes and shipping.**

© 2026 Ruth Gilbert. All Rights Reserved.

MOVING ABROAD TIMELINE

- ○ **Start gathering packing supplies and researching moving options: full international moving companies, freight forwarders, or a self-move plus shipping. Get at least three written quotes and check reviews and insurance terms.**

  ★Tip: A garage can be very useful as a display showroom for your sale. Also items that do not sell on the first day of the sale can remain in place without the need to move them.

- ○ **Begin packing non-essentials (off-season clothing, decorations, sports gear). Label boxes clearly and include an inventory sheet inside each box.**

Regulatory and Documents Checklist:

- ○ **Passports: ensure all family passports are valid for the destination's required minimum (often 6 months beyond initial arrival).**

- ○ **Visas and residence permits: research visa types and lead times. Work, family, study, and long-stay visitor visas have different application processes. Apply early.**

- ○ **Civil documents: secure original or certified copies of birth certificates, marriage certificates, degree certificates, and police records if required. Many countries require these to be legalized (see "Apostille/legalization" below).**

- ○ **Health: review required vaccinations and medical forms; request copies of medical and dental records. If you need medications, get prescriptions and export documents.**

- ○ **School records: request transcripts and records well in advance for children's school registrations.**

- ○ **Vehicle documents: if you plan to export a car, gather title, registration, and service history.**

  ★FYi: Document Authentication - Some countries accept Apostilles (Hague Convention member nations); others require their own embassy authentication procedures. Research your destination's requirements. This process can take time.

© 2026 Ruth Gilbert. All Rights Reserved.

MOVING ABROAD TIMELINE

2 MONTHS BEFORE YOUR MOVE

Packing, Storage, and Logistics:

- ○ **Finalize whether you'll ship household goods or buy/replace necessities abroad. Compare the total cost: moving + customs duties + local taxes + storage, as opposed to the replacement costs at your destination.**

- ○ **If you need domestic storage for possessions that will not make the trip, choose a climate-controlled space and separate items for storage versus shipment. Mark the boxes clearly to avoid any possible confusion.**

- ○ **Continue systematically packing. Set a goal each day, and try to stick to it. A steady pace now will avoid stress later.**

  ★Tip: Be certain to keep essential documents and valuables with you, or in a safe place, in order to avoid packing them in boxes to be shipped.

- ○ **Arrange charitable pickups or disposal for items you're not taking. Keep written receipts for donations.**

Customs & Taxes:

- ○ **Personal Effects versus Commercial Goods - Most countries give preferential tariff treatment to used personal effects for returning residents or new immigrants, but definitions vary. New items, goods intended for sale at the destination, or commercial samples may trigger duties and VAT (Value-Added Tax).**

- ○ **Valuation - Customs Services calculate duties and taxes based upon your declared valuations. Over-valuing or under-valuing items in your documentation can risk penalties, and/or unnecessary tax. Use honest, documented values when assessing your possessions.**

- ○ **VAT/GST and Import Duties - Many countries charge VAT/GST on imports; some also add import duties according to standard tariff codes. You may wish to do a bit of research, here. Compare typical rates for similar furniture, electronics, clothing, and**

© 2026 Ruth Gilbert. All Rights Reserved.

MOVING ABROAD TIMELINE

vehicles at your destination. If it doesn't make sense to move and pay tariffs on some of your current possessions, then you might consider arranging for a sale, charitable pickups or the disposal of items that will not be making the trip. Keep written receipts for donations.

- Temporary Import - For professional equipment or commercial samples, an ATA (Admission Temporaire - Temporary Admission) Carnet can avoid import duties if you will be re-exporting the items within the predetermined carnet period. For household moves, some jurisdictions offer temporary admission or exemptions - check regulations with your host nation to be.

- Avoiding Pitfalls - Bring dated proof of prior ownership (photos, receipts) to show items are used and eligible for relief, if possible. Try to keep inventory lists orderly, and label boxes consistently. Try to make it easy for customs personnel to do their jobs. Do not pack prohibited or restricted items (see below).

Restricted and Prohibited Items:

- Firearms, certain knives, some plants and animal products, items with lithium batteries in large quantities, perishable foods, and chemicals often have restrictions or special permits. Always check both Canadian export controls and destination import rules.

1 MONTH UNTIL THE MOVE

Confirm Services and Finalize Plans:

- Make doctor's appointments, if needed, to get necessary prescriptions refills ordered. Be certain that you will have enough medication to cover your needs, until an appointment can be arranged to see a doctor at your destination.

- Confirm your schedule with the moving company/freight forwarder; request detailed shipping documents and timelines (including pickup, port of export, shipping mode, route, estimated arrival). Request written terms for insurance, available delivery window, and claims processes to have on-hand.

- If using a customs broker, provide your inventory, proofs of ownership, and any required certificates so they can pre-classify goods and estimate duties.

© 2026 Ruth Gilbert. All Rights Reserved.

MOVING ABROAD TIMELINE

★**Tip: Inquire as to how much storage at the destination port/warehouse may cost. If your belongings will arrive before you, it will be less expensive to have your movers temporarily store the container than to leave it on site at the port facility.**

- ○ **It is time to book your flights and accommodations, if required. Make sure that there are no on-going international events that might disrupt your move by visiting the Canadian government's, Travel Advisories page.**

- ○ **Arrange for mail forwarding and notify financial institutions, insurers, and subscriptions of your pending address change or cancellations. Schedule utilities cancellations, and arrange for final meter readings prior to your departure.**

★**Tip: Remember that any debts present will need to be serviced while outside of Canada in order to maintain your credit rating.**

- ○ **If buying new furniture or appliances abroad, then confirm delivery times and electrical compatibility of your possessions, i.e. voltage and plug type. For large items shipped to you, ensure the mover is aware of any destination building access limits/restrictions. Arrange last minute charitable pickups, or disposals, for items you are not taking.**

Vehicles and Compliance:

- ○ **Import rules for vehicles differ widely around the world; emissions, safety standards, and modifications may be required to meet local regulations abroad. Some countries allow temporary import with limits; others require conversion or re-certification. Confer with regulators in your destination country early in the month, and prepare your export title.**

LAST WEEK BEFORE THE BIG DAY

Final checks and Last-Minute Preparations:

- ○ **Re-confirm the pickup and arrival dates with movers; and get contact phone numbers for overseas agents used for shipping. Keep copies of all transport documents (bill(s) of lading, airway bill, freight invoice, etc.).**

- ○ **Prepare a travel pack with passports, flight itinerary, visas, driver's licenses, health**

© 2026 Ruth Gilbert. All Rights Reserved.

cards, prescriptions, cash and cards, important certificates, and at least one clear paper copy of your household inventory. Carry high-value or sentimental items with you.

Payments, insurance and records:

- **Purchase moving insurance if you have not done so, yet. Understand the difference between carrier liability and declared-value coverage. For high-value items get "All-Risk" coverage and confirm appraisal documentation.**

Turn-off and Transfer Tasks:

- **If the property that you are leaving will be vacant, then consider securing and winterizing (if needed to prevent plumbing damage), or maintain utilities and perhaps arrange for a house-sitter to keep an eye on the property, while you are away.**

MOVING DAY

Final checks and Last-Minute Preparations:

- **Supervise packing and loading of the moving truck, check inventories as items are loaded, and sign all mover paperwork only after you understand the terms. Get copies of the signed inventory and transport documents.**

- **Hand-carry documents and valuables. Keep bags that you will travel with containing clothing, medications, and essential items to get you through the first week at your destination in case delays or interruptions occur.**

- **On arrival abroad, present passports and visas at immigration and, when required, declare goods. If you have pre-arranged customs clearance via a broker, provide them with your cargo's arrival details.**

AT THE DESTINATION

- **Customs clearance varies from place to place. Some shipments clear quickly, others require inspections that can take a day, or two. If duties or VAT are due on your**

© 2026 Ruth Gilbert. All Rights Reserved.

possessions, you will be asked to pay before delivery. Keep invoices and proof of pre-existing ownership ready to claim any exemptions.

- If items are held for inspection, be patient but persistent; maintain close contact with your broker or mover's local agent. Document any damage on your delivery receipts, and begin submitting claims immediately.

GETTING SETTLED-IN

- Once moved-in to your new place unpack essentials, first. Verify delivered items against the inventory and note any missing or damaged items on the delivery paperwork. Start claims with the mover/insurer promptly.

- Register with local authorities as required (residency registration, tax ID, health system, schools). Arrange to have your utilities set up, and open a local bank account.

Congratulations on your move! Enjoy your new surroundings.

© 2026 Ruth Gilbert. All Rights Reserved.